

Eckhart Tolle - The Light Behind the Unheard and the Unseen

[Speaker 1] (1:32 - 1:37:28)

The bells returned to the manifested realm. Refreshed. The ringing of the bells traditionally is a spiritual wake-up call, preceded usually by the alarm clock.

That's another kind of waking up. As we are speaking of waking up, I hope the people in Austin and Hollyhock are fully awake also. They are over there where the camera is.

I'm sorry you have to get up so early, but you're here. This is the day that we spend in silence, except for this person up here. Well, not really.

Although the words are there, there's still the dimension of silence, of stillness, is present. More important than the words. So if you can be attentive to both the words, and more importantly that which is between the words, which to the mind is nothing.

And indeed it is no thing. And yet it's an energy field. The wonderful thing is, you cannot become attentive to that without the same field of stillness being activated within you.

The very fact that you notice the silent gaps in between words, or in between sentences, means the very same silence, the very same stillness at that moment, is in you also. Otherwise you wouldn't even notice it. And you may also be surprised to find that in the moment of noticing the silent gap, you are not thinking.

You may also find if the gaps become too long, you notice it at first, and then you start thinking again. That's okay. Or you may not.

But that is the most significant thing that can happen to you in this lifetime, on this planet, where you've taken temporary form as a so-called person. Of course you are consciousness. The most significant thing is this cessation of thinking without loss of consciousness.

From our normal perspective, the perspective of the normal everyday mind, the perspective of thought, it looks like there's nothing there. There's nothing there that can be grasped or understood. And yet it's the ground of all being, the very ground of your existence.

Existence is the manifested. Being, the way I use these words, is the unmanifested life that you are, underneath the form, the background, we can also call it. So to be aware here continuously of the background to all this, the field of stillness, the field of aware presence, of self-aware stillness.

And also be aware of that which arises in the stillness. Words, sense perceptions, bodily

sensations. But to have your roots, to be grounded in the stillness.

And here, all you have to do is be aware of the gaps between the words. Now there's something that cannot be manufactured, something that needs already to be there in you, a readiness, the ability even to be aware of the gaps. We could call that ability alertness.

And that's the true meaning of waking up out of the dream of thought, of being identified with a continuous stream of thought. So most of you, or almost everyone here has this ability already. There's enough presence in you so that you can notice, be aware of the silent spaces.

And in that awareness, the awareness of the silent space, really, what is a silent space? It's the absence of something. Where before there was a word, the word has returned, the sound has returned into nothingness.

Before there was something, now there is nothing. So what is the silent space? It's the absence of something, of the thingness of life.

So when we say you are aware of the silent space, it's a strange way of putting it. It works as a pointer. But what does that really mean?

You are aware, first you are aware of a word, your attention is on the word, then the word disappears. And it is not replaced by inner words arising in you, because attention remains, the word disappears. And so when we say you are now aware of the gap, what's really happening is you have become self-aware.

Awareness or consciousness has become, has recognized itself. Without, the object is gone, just the field of bare attention remains. And that's, that is a realm of, also of great peace, the silent peace that's always there in the background.

And as you realize that, it seems to become stronger. It seems to grow inside you. That's probably a perspective only, but it seems to grow and become stronger.

So as you sit here, you don't grow in knowledge very much, except a few Zen stories, but you grow in awareness. However, any words that we use to describe it are already somewhat misleading. Perhaps a better way of putting it is to say that as you sit here, you shrink.

The person shrinks. The personal sense of self that's identified with thought diminishes and something else emerges. And so I've pointed out before, maybe not here, this is not a personal development group.

Sometimes I say that when I arrive at the airport and the immigration officer says, what are you going to do here? What, what do you, what do you teach? In order to reach him

at all, I sometimes say personal development and know that it's not true.

But if I said personal shrinkage, he wouldn't let me in. Now the person remains, but what gradually happens is there comes a shift. The transcendent dimension in you becomes stronger than the personal.

The personal can still be used, your name, the conventions that are to do with the way interacting with others. But more and more something, something else flows into that. And we could call that stillness, but not stillness as just an absence of noise, but stillness as a, an alive presence.

So stillness flows into your sense perceptions. It flows into your looking. That's why you've been looking at things in nature and realize that it becomes so much more alive when you don't label or interpret it.

So it flows into your looking. So the stillness is also attention. It's a stream.

A, one could call it a current of awareness, where before there was thought, very different energy frequency, thought. When you approach anything or perceive anything through thought, very different frequency. You can see when you look at a person, whether he or she is perceiving you through thought or through stillness, or when a person is looking at something, you can see whether they are classifying it, interpreting it, finding some kind of personal relationship to it.

People do that with trees and flowers too. Some people have the compulsion to pick flowers because they need to enter into a personal relationship with a flower, not realizing that they could be in a much deeper relationship if they went beyond the personal that says, I would like to have that. Or even if you don't pick it, you might think, how would that look in my garden, in my backyard?

Or have some kind of comparison to it. Put it in some kind of comparative category. It's not even necessarily to do with yourself, but it's still, I overheard a man saying, he was looking at the sun, at the sky after sunset, or was it after sunrise?

And he said to his companion, look at that Turner sky. Turner is a British artist who lived, I believe, in the 19th century, who painted beautiful paintings of light, sky, just light. And finally, yes, he was looking, but it also had to be compared to something.

You can look more deeply if you don't classify and compare it to anything. And it is likely that Turner himself looked at the sky in the state of complete open presence, with reference to nothing else, not to another word, to a word, or anything else. And sometimes you find people who are walking in nature, and it's beautiful, and lush.

But the mind comes in, and for a moment they look, and then they say to you, yeah, oh, you should go to Hawaii. It's even more lush there. And then they start telling you about

Hawaii while you carry on walking.

So this current of awareness flowing through you into your sense perceptions, your seeing, your hearing, but it also flows as a kind of emanation, because every human being has a certain emanation. Now, most humans have the emanation of mind. And many humans, in addition, have the emanation frequently of pain body.

And many humans have a very nervous emanation, tense. Where is the next thing? They want to get to the next thing, and at the same time feel threatened by the next thing that's going to come.

So that's what they emanate with their being. And that's the entire civilization. To a large extent, big cities have that energy field that's generated by millions of people.

There are certain other countries where at first it feels, ah, there's less nervousness here. But then you realize that actually the energy field, although it may not be nervous, is a little sleepy. Instead of going beyond thought, they are drifting below thought.

And so you tend to see lots of people sitting or lying around street corners in a state of semi-sleep. And yes, it feels, I've just arrived from New York, it feels great for a while. And you also sometimes find human beings who seem to be more peaceful.

And you yourself may find that in certain situations or conditions, you're not as nervous after a few drinks, after taking this or that substance. And it's great, it's a glimpse of what it means not to be thinking. That's how alive you can feel.

But in many of these cases when you've taken a few drinks, yes, you're beginning to step out of thought and you feel better. Oh, that feels good, I must have another drink. Oh, let's have another.

And before you know it, you're going towards unconsciousness and sleep. Yes, you have stepped out of the stream of thinking, but have stepped, as one could say, in evolutionary terms, you're stepping back. That too can be a relief.

But this is not what's happening here. We, from the stream of thinking, we are stepping beyond. And we do not go back to sleep when the mind no longer thinks.

We are more alert, far more awake than when we were immersed in thinking. So there comes that quality, that's the way we are going. Yes, we are transcending thought, not back to where we came from, but rising above thought.

Now that state of rising above thought, where you can still use thought beautifully, powerfully when it's needed, but you are no longer possessed by thought or consumed by thought. Thought, useless thinking, burning up a lot of your life energy. Not going anywhere, just going around, just like the car is in neutral, you're pressing, pushing down

the accelerator, not going anywhere, just for hours and hours and hours.

So going, stepping beyond thought into that clarity and alertness that is both gentle and fierce, that has two aspects seemingly contradictory. It's very gentle, that energy field of alert presence, but also has a fierceness. It needs to have a fierceness because it needs to cut through thought, that substance that, and thought is heavy, dense.

So to cut through that density of thought, coupled with the density of the emotional field that goes with the thoughts, you have the two layers, the density of thought, the density of that emotional field, pain body, and they cling together as two layers of density. And then comes presence. And in this case here, it comes from two directions.

That's why it's possible for this to happen. From within you, that dimension of presence emerges, pushes forward. But it might not have enough in the absence of extreme and agonizing suffering that cracks it open from above.

It may not have enough power to cut through the density. So all you feel then is an extreme restlessness, something wanting to happen, and there may be searching and something wants to be almost be born here, but it can't be born. It's not because the shell is not cracking.

But here it's being also pierced from here, from this, the energy field that is here in this room that comes through this teaching, which is more than the words, so that the presence is cutting through from within you and from without. So it's just the way they built the channel tunnel from two ways. They started in England and in France digging, and finally they met in the middle, and they had cut through these layers of seemingly impenetrable rock.

So if it were not already happening from within you, it would be meaningless, and it wouldn't work for you to be here. So the layer of thought that stream is being cut through, and when you leave here, there will, we trust, be enough presence in you so that it can happen without the external help, although occasionally it's still helpful to listen, to be reminded, to open a book and read just a few lines that have come out of presence. That's helpful as long as you need it.

But there is enough presence in you now so that you can use it as a sword. And I'm now talking about the active side of presence, because presence is both fierce and gentle. It has an active aspect and a passive aspect.

It depends from what perspective you look on it. So when we say that allow this moment to be, in that there is an arising. There's surrender and presence go together.

Surrender to what is is one side of presence, and that looks passive, but that is not the full picture. You cannot surrender to what is, it would not work if there were not also a fierce aspect to presence, an active, very active aspect to presence. So on the one hand,

it's very gentle and allowing, but it is also, it acts like a sword that cuts through accumulations collective of the collective human mind and pain body.

So there comes this attention. When the Zen master raises his finger and looks at you, there's a fierce look on his face. We see it in old drawings of Zen masters.

You wouldn't want to meet them in a dark street, eyes come bulging out of their heads. So they represent the fierce aspect of presence. Underneath it, if you look closely, if the artist who draw this drawing of the Zen master was in tune with the Zen master's inner state, if you look closely, you will find also hidden there underneath the fierceness, the gentle aspect of presence.

It's hidden. If you look into the eyes, they both are present there. So allowing what is to be needs to come together with a sword-like aspect, almost what seems the mind would say irreconcilable, but they're not irreconcilable, perhaps only from the point of view of the mind.

So how does that work? This moment, something arises. This moment takes form as an event that appears in front of you, a person or an event.

Now, allowing this moment to be as it is in whatever form it arises requires you to face fully what is, not opposing, facing in an open way, not facing as if you were fighting a battle against something. You face it in an open way, like this, to have your arms extended like this. So this is the gentle, and yet at the same time you look it straight in the eye, so to speak, whatever it is.

This is the gentle, the receptive, and the attention is the fierce. So you welcome what is, but there's a fierce attention that flows through you onto whatever it is that's happening, not fighting anything, just its fierce alertness, and that cuts through the old reactions that otherwise would, that are all accumulations in the reactive mind. They can then not operate anymore, and intelligence itself, which is attention, attention is great intelligence, but very different from the accumulated so-called intelligence of the human mind.

That is a limited aspect of the greater intelligence, a limited form that this greater intelligence can take, which is fine too. It's only not fine anymore if that is all you know, and all you think you are. If you are good at solving IQ tests, well, that is an aspect of the limited intelligence, and that's fine if you are good at that.

If you get your identity from that, it becomes problematic. I'm a member of, I think it's in England, they have Mensa, which is all the people who have very high IQs can become members of that. And some people let that flow into a conversation just casually.

Now, if I'm offending one or two people here, I'm sorry. That is beautiful. Why not?

If you can use your mind in such a way, it's a beautiful thing to do. If that becomes an important part of your sense of self, then you get trapped in an illusory identity, and you probably have a few more things to add to it. And that is part of identifying with the realm of content.

I don't qualify to become a member of Mensa, unfortunately. The mind doesn't work in that way anymore, or I think it never did. I could never solve mathematical problems, and I always admired people who could.

I can't even see where the problem is. When I was at school, after the age of 13, I stopped going to school. I couldn't stand it anymore.

But I still had, they had all these problems that you had to solve. I couldn't even, my mind would go blank after reading the first few lines. A man has five sacks of potatoes, and then he takes two away and takes half of that content out and puts it into another sack.

How much is left? And that's okay for a problem to solve if there actually is a man. So we are conditioned to create problems for ourselves.

That lies in the conditioning of the mind. And so often, when you think you have a problem, really, your mind is creating a problem for yourself. If it isn't happening at this moment, if there's no action you can take right now, and so comes the fierce aspect of presence.

Oh, I've got so much on my mind, so much, what is the expression, so much on my plate. And so you need to remember the sort of presence. What's the problem at this moment?

Can't find any. Yeah, but it's not this norm, but tomorrow when I get there, what's going to happen when I, when this or that, when the moment comes, there's more than enough power in you to face it and to take right action when right action is called for, because you will face the challenge when it's true in that state of welcoming attention and look it straight in the face. And in that moment, there is no thought.

When you face a challenge, truly, there is no thought. There is just the looking, and it may be an actual looking or metaphorically speaking, you're looking at the situation, the totality of what has arisen at this moment. What needs to be solved, responded to, dealt with at this moment.

And you look. And in that looking, that is fierce and gentle at the same time, there is an activation of a greater intelligence than what you have learned, whatever you may have learned. Now, what you have learned may eventually come into play also, because eventually perhaps you will take action, part of which is to do with certain things that you have learned to do.

Or you will speak words, which is to do with using language that you learned in the past. But that will be only an instrument of the, it will be inspired use of whatever form comes into play when you deal with it. But there's always, there's the moment of alert, aware sessions in which there's no thought and there's just the looking.

And any master does that in any field, has the ability to look for a moment and then respond out of that, the greater intelligence responds out of that. You just, in the same way that great sportsmen play their sports, no tennis player, great tennis player thinks, well, I think the ball is going to come there next, so I'll better move to the left now. Now, now better, now I've got to get ready for the other side to jump to there.

Now I have to two meters forward quickly. It would be impossible through conceptual thinking in the mind, there's no thought. And if thought interferes, they're not playing well today.

And they all have days when they're not playing well. And very great sportsmen actually enjoy tremendously the flow of energy and realize that they are not doing it, but there's the ability to just be there. So this is the non-conceptual intelligence in you, the non-conditioned, unconditioned intelligence in you that becomes activated.

And that deals with problems beautifully, true problems, or rather true challenges, because there are no problems. Problem arises when you are either imagining something happening to you now, it is not happening, you're somewhere else, it's not happening now. You're dwelling mentally on some possible situation, because even if you had an illness that is very problematic, you don't know the outcome.

Will I survive or will I not survive? Of course, eventually, nobody here survives as the form. How much longer will I survive?

Is that now some people, to some people, that becomes a dreadful burden, to know that you have a condition that you may not survive, which of course, everybody is suffering from it in a wider sense. It's called, it's an incurable disease called mortality. The diagnosis is fatal.

Mortality apparently always ends in death. So some people who see their lifespan, they cannot, they don't know how much future they have. It can become an enormous problem, because you think, I have not fully lived my life.

If you're 90 and the doctor tells you, you only have two years, maybe that's not so bad. But even then, some people say, oh no, I need a bit more time. But if you are 30, it seems more problematic, or if you're 20, and the doctor says, you may not have much time left.

And then comes panic, and then comes a sense of unfulfillment, in some sense, I haven't even started yet. I haven't fulfilled what I've come here to do. All the things that I

potentially could do, I won't be able to do them.

It's, you become a huge problem suddenly, your enormous suffering arises. But in some cases, it happens that the uncertainty about how much future you have, or seeing that you have very little future left, future is removed from you, forces you more deeply into the present moment. So I have, I know some people who have a so-called serious, life, so-called life-threatening illness.

Of course, life is eternal, but it threatens the form that you are. A so-called life-threatening illness. And they have become enormously present, because they have no future to escape to anymore.

It's just always, they live totally in the now. The future is so uncertain, there may be nothing there, so there's no point in even projecting anything, it's just... And some have become spiritual teachers, and become transparent through this enormous current of awareness that goes through them.

And they smile, and they... Occasionally, waves of fear may still come even to them, and then it passes, and they're back in presence. And they realize, no matter what they could have achieved in or through time, because that has its place.

As long as you have what looks like time, why not do things in time? Of course, you learn a skill, you learn a language, you learn to do this or that, you travel here or there, see new places, have new experiences, all these things time is good for. Well, nothing helps you if you're always in the future, no matter what you experience.

So that is where usually you seek fulfillment of your life, by adding more things that only time can give you, because more implies more time. I need to add more to me to be fully myself. On the level of form, that is true.

If you are 20, you haven't started living, you haven't learned anything, perhaps you're just learning to become a pianist or great computer expert or whatever, and you suddenly get interrupted. On that level, it seems your life has come to nothing. But your life is not your life.

There isn't even you and life. There's only life of which you are a temporary expression. There's only the one consciousness of which you are a temporary expression.

And if that flowers, when you are 20, and the true flowering is not the achievement of this or that, sometimes a flowering happens indirectly through an achievement, which doesn't help the person either if they still identify with as a formal achievement. But the true flowering is the arising of presence in you, when you become transparent. And that can happen at any age.

And it doesn't matter where you are in your life situation. It doesn't matter whether,

because there are some people here who have succeeded in the world, and others who in the eyes of the world have not succeeded. There are others here who have succeeded years ago and then failed.

And others who have failed miserably up to this point, and in a year from now, they'll be rich and famous. It all happens. I was a failure in the eyes of the world 10 years ago, 8 years ago.

Now the world thinks I'm a success. Completely meaningless. Completely meaningless.

But it doesn't matter where you are at or what life situation you're in at the present time. The ultimate purpose of your existence is for this form to manifest that which is beyond manifestation. To become an opening for the unconditioned, for the stillness, the awareness, that energy stream, that frequency, so to speak.

I believe it was Ramana Maharshi who sometimes used the expression, a current of awareness that flows through you that is non-conceptual intelligence. And intelligence, even that's a limitation. It's more than that.

It's love too. The first time I'm using this word here, because some words you have to be careful with. Words like God.

Words like love. Because the reality to which these words point is so far greater than the word that it's usually misleading to even say it. But now I've said it.

What flows through you, when we call it intelligence or great power that deals with any problem, any challenge, there is no problem, that arises, it's not just that. That which flows through you is also love, that energy stream that is there when that openness is there. And it doesn't matter what your life situation is or how much future you have left.

If that is there even an hour before you die, that is the flowering of your life. There's no thing as your life, we're just using it as an expression. It's the flowering of consciousness through this form.

It's the birth of that into this world. And then the mind comes, okay, then what happens after that? It wants to know what comes next.

What comes after it has flowered? Maybe there's a question in the basket about it. Let it flower first and then see what happens.

Extreme challenges have the ability potentially to push you into the state of presence, to force you into the state of presence. Little challenges, which are the majority of challenges, usually pull you into unconsciousness. Unless you now know that you can actually use whatever, so to speak, goes wrong in your life as your spiritual practice.

Ah, great, here's another one. And then you bring the allowing to it and the attention.

And you look.

You look at the cold soup. You look at the lost bell that was here. Oh, my bells, I've had them for years.

A friend of mine gave them to me, and the Dalai Lama gave them to my friend. And they are gone. Somebody must have taken them.

Oh, no, it can't be. And instead, you look where the bells were before. There's now an empty space.

Well, now they are back, but there was an empty space. Now, there's something deeply significant about the empty spaces that are left behind by any kind of loss. For example, these are the bells.

You may get back to your car or where your car once was. And in the parking lot, there's only an empty space. And here it is vital, if you can stop and face that empty space without running away from it or cursing the empty space or immediately going into reactive.

This is very strange. And this is one example. The empty space can also be left by relationships, the wife, the partner, the husband.

One day you get home and there's a letter which says, I'm gone. I'm out of here. And if you can, again, at that moment, the form that this moment takes, we use that expression here, and here we come to something very significant.

The form that this moment takes sometimes is an absence of the form that was there a moment before. And because suddenly there is a no form where there was a form before, that is an enormous opening into the deeper awareness of the formless consciousness, unconditioned formless that you are. If you can not run away from it, if you can face this death, because the loss of anything is a small death.

The loss of the bells that you've had for years is a small death because the form is gone. The loss of your BMW is a death. The Rolls Royce, an even bigger death.

And of course there may be an actual death, and this is an amazing thing. The person that was here every day in this room used to sit in this chair. That's the armchair.

That's where the desk where they sat. And one day the message comes, they're gone. Passed away.

And then you look at the empty chair. The person was so, it was so real, it seemed so permanent to have that personality sitting in that armchair doing its thing, its work, talking, having its opinions, being there. How is it, it's inconceivable that suddenly it's, that person is, where is he?

Dissolved. Just dissolved, like a soap bubble. Gone.

And so most people, this is the empty space that is left behind by death. Whenever a form dissolves in your life, it may be an actual death, it may be the loss of something that had been important to you. If you can face that hole that is left behind by the form that is no longer there, it's a temporary hole into the dimension of the formless.

Now, one could almost say, God, we're using that word again, the formless one life, the formless, timeless, one consciousness that underlies all manifestation momentarily shines through whenever there is a hole in the tapestry of physical existence. It's kind of the tapestry of forms. And in this tapestry of forms, which is gigantic, regularly, or all the time, holes appear.

If you were watching, let's just use the metaphor and say, the entire physical universe, sense-perceived universe, imagine it as an extremely complex tapestry, woven, huge, of course. And you look at it, and then you see, continuously, here and there, little things suddenly disappearing, and temporary holes being there, opening up in the tapestry. Then suddenly there and there.

So part of this tapestry, it's a continuously coming and going out and into form. No form in this tapestry remains for long. And so holes open up continuously in it, and then are replaced by something else.

But if you can be aware of the holes, the openings, something shines through them that is not to do with form, but it's the essence of all form. And that is enormously peaceful. There's enormous peace and aliveness there.

And that is the grace that lies concealed in any kind of death, accidental death, seemingly premature death, any kind of death, and any kind of loss. There is a grace there, potentially, but it does not help you if you deny it or run away from it. You say, no, I don't want to see that hole.

And you cover up the hole with reactions immediately, so that you don't have to face the emptiness. So when emptiness comes in your life, that is a beautiful, potentially, a beautiful opening in which you can actually find yourself. You find yourself by not resisting that.

And so you begin to welcome death when it comes, because it is an inseparable part of this world of form. And when we look at death, we judge it from the point of view of an identity, a sense of self that is identified with form. And from there, death looks horrible.

It looks dreadful. That's why nobody dares speak about it in Western culture, which is the most identified with egoic forms. Nobody dares.

Maybe one of the few countries left where death is still natural is India, where it's in the

street. You can go to the bonfires where they burn the dead bodies every day. You can watch the very deep meditation.

If you can be there in a state of complete openness and just watch, that's the destiny of every form, is to dissolve again quickly. And when you watch, contemplate the dissolving of forms, that which is beyond form arises in you. You are in touch then with the formless in you.

That's the grace of death. Which is not the opposite of life. It's only the opposite of birth.

People think life and death, it's a question of life and death. No, it's a question of birth and death. Life is eternal.

Life cannot be destroyed. Forms, yes. Even physicists know that no energy is destroyed ever.

And in a wider sense, as you live in the present more and more, it's a continuous dying. As the expression goes, you die to the past every moment. You let go.

And this moment is always fresh. You can, of course, you remember what you need to remember, but you let go of any personalized attachment to a memory. There's nothing wrong with memories.

You need it. You wouldn't be able find your way back to your street, your house. Memory, of course, you need.

But self-identification with memory, you don't. So, as you live in presence, there's a continuous dying to this continuity of me, which is an accumulation of more and more things that I identify with. The continuity.

And that could be anything. You die to the past. When the bell is gone, it is gone.

It has disappeared. It is the past. And this moment remains fresh.

Oh, there is a freshness even in when something has dissolved. One could go so far as to say there is a breath of fresh air, metaphorically speaking, comes into this world of space-time, this world of physicality. Whenever a form dissolves, ah, ah, there's a lightness.

Ah. And with that, you welcome death. Stillness wanted to last a little longer.

Stillness is the death that you enter voluntarily, if you're ready for it. To relinquish your attachment to the structures of thought, to step out of the stream of thinking, is death, because thinking is form, primordial form. To step out of that is death.

The arising of stillness is your death, the death of the little me. Of course it is. And there

are still many humans on the planet who are not ready for that.

They want to stay entangled in form. They want a continuation of the drama of form. They don't want an end to the drama.

There are humans, many humans still on the planet, who are not ready for the end of suffering. Even if the possibility were presented to them, they would run away in fear. It would seem like, no, the end of suffering would seem like a kind of death, the end of my drama.

I don't want that. But there are many humans also who are ready to stop suffering, to come to the end of suffering. It's an evolutionary development.

Now for this to, this shift to happen to you, there is one requirement, and we can put it in simple language. You need to be fed up with suffering. Not run away from it, not avoid it, but be fed up with it.

You've had enough. I've had enough. And if you are in psychological suffering, and all suffering is psychological suffering, the rest may be pain, toothache, whatever it may be, you can ask yourself at any moment, when you can see that you are in suffering, is that what I want?

Is that what I'm choosing at this moment? Is that what I'm creating at this moment? Humanity as a whole is coming to the point where the suffering is just too much.

It's been going on for so long. And for most of you, it is true, you have suffered enough. But it needs to be true for you.

That realization needs to come to you. So that no situation, nothing that happens to you, is converted into drama and suffering anymore. And the quickest way out of that, out of converting events, situations, interactions with people into drama and suffering, is to be present moment-centered, not story-centered, not thought-centered, not imposing interpretations and stories on the present moment, but allowing the moment to be as it is.

I gave a simple example of what is, what the mechanism that makes up the manufacture of drama and suffering in people's lives, the mental mechanism, the mechanicalness behind it. I gave a brief example in this little book, *Stillness Speaks*, where in one entry, one entry starts with three statements. One statement says, what a miserable day.

The other statement says, he didn't have the decency to return my call. The other statement says, she let me down. Then the text explains a little bit that these are stories that you impose on situations, events, and people in your life.

And those are simple, very simple examples, but even the complicated drama basically

works according to that same principle. It's just that the stories that you impose become more complex. But this is where they start.

And the stories are imposed, in many cases, one of their main reasons for being there is to enhance your egoic, mind-made sense of self, to be right. Because if you are right, if you can complain about this miserable weather, unconsciously, the mechanism behind it is you've made the weather wrong and yourself right. You're in a superior position because you're complaining about it.

What this dreadful weather is just dreadful. If you can say, he didn't have the decency to return my call, it implies, this is unconscious, that you, of course, are morally superior in every way to this person. This is the position that you are coming from and identify with.

I'm not saying you do not see that certain people do very unconscious things. You see it, but the story then personalizes it, you find a reactive and personalized relationship to somebody's, perhaps, unconsciousness, and then use it to enhance your mind-made sense of self. This doesn't mean you don't see dysfunctional behavior for what it is, but you do not have a personalized reactive relationship to it anymore.

You allow that to be also. There's no person there. There's only human unconsciousness.

You don't enter into that personalized relationship that is story-based. She let me down. She wasn't there.

I was there. She was not. That's the event without the story.

It's raining. That's the miserable day without the story. He didn't call.

That's the event without the story. He didn't have the decency to return my call. It's amazing how simple things go.

If you take away the story, the simplicity of what is without the personalized story around it, how simple life then becomes. How simple this moment always is without imposing a story on it, which is, in any case, only there in the service of being right, in the service of feeling superior to the situation or the person, in the service of enhancing your always deficient mind-made egoic sense of self. This is all madness, dysfunction.

If you look and see how people complicate their lives for nothing, for an illusory identity. Then what is left then is things are as they are at this moment. People do what they do at this moment.

Beautifully illustrated in the story that you may have heard perhaps through this mouth before, in the story of the Zen master. Some of you probably don't know it, but it's such a beautiful story. The Zen master, who had an excellent reputation as a great teacher in a town in Japan, and one day was accused by the 17-year-old girl next door of being the

father to her child that had just been born.

The parents asked, who is the father? They were shocked that she was giving birth to a baby. And she finally said, it was the master next door.

I went to see him nine months ago for a spiritual counseling session and then that's when he did it to me. And so the parents got extremely angry and started telling everybody about it. And they ran to the Zen master with the baby and put it there on his floor and said, we know what you did.

You are responsible. Now you look after the baby. We don't want anything to do with this baby anymore.

You take it. You are the father. We know it all now.

The Zen master looked and listened. And when they said, you are the father of this baby, he said, is that so? And then they said, yes, and we are leaving this baby here.

You can look after him. Is that so? Then they left.

The Zen master lost his reputation. Nobody came to him for counseling sessions anymore. Nobody wanted to hear him anymore.

All he had there was the baby. So that was the present moment. He picked up the baby and started getting some food, sent off somebody to get some food and spent one year mostly looking after the baby that was there.

A year later, the girl was a little bit more mature and cuddly confessed to her parents that the Zen master was actually not the father. It was the son of the butcher next door was the father. So, oh my God, they ran to the Zen master and said, please forgive us.

That is all a big mistake. We've just realized that you are not the father. The Zen master looked and said, is that so?

And they said, oh, can we have the baby back now, please? We now want the baby. We'll look after it.

So we want the baby back. Is that so? Okay.

And off they went. This is an extreme example of the good that comes. Only good is when no story, even stories that other people try to impose on you, is accepted.

No story is taken on. And this Zen is an extreme example of, it's a teaching story. It's an extreme example of non-reactive relationship to life and a non-story imposing relationship on life.

They had their story. They had to do, they had to make the Zen master wrong. The Zen

master refused any kind of story, any kind of, he wasn't a victim of circumstance.

He didn't say, I can't look after this baby. What do I do? I can't have spent my time.

No, he did what was there to do at that moment. So the baby had the best possible start in life, because for one year grew up in this energy field of great peace with the Zen master. But then the Zen master did not cling, did not have a clinging relationship to that.

He was able to, in the moment, let go of the past and relinquished the baby and responded to this moment. The parents now, he so genuinely wanted the baby back. He, she was going to marry the butcher's son.

So this is an example of the simplicity. It may be a little bit extreme. You can, you can of course say, no, I am not the father.

There would be another possibility that is still not a story. No, I'm not the father. But if that is what you believe, I cannot help it.

Again, you are not buying into the story. But if you had your own, then people, you have a, you have a story to, to counteract their story, and so on, and so on, the stuff out of which drama is made. So look at your life and see, are you facing situations as they are?

Are you, or are you imposing and mixing up something here? Stories on simple, the simplicity that is always there in this moment. So that is, it's good to know that because the mind will always try to manufacture stories.

And the biggest one, of course, the most intriguing story, is the story of me, me and my life. That's so interesting. And if you can't tell anybody else about me and my life, then you can tell yourself about me and my, much about my life.

The story of me, the most fascinating story. And the story of me is part of the ego, the egoic sense of self. Not saying that you do not remember what happened to you.

Of course you remember what happened to you. Not saying don't have the photo albums anymore. You still have the photo albums, but to derive your identity from a story.

And when you look at the story of me, they can see that a lot of the identity that is derived from the story of me is to do, very often, with making other people wrong. And see how right you have been in that situation. And how wrong those people have been to you compared to, or situations, or God, him, her, or itself.

God itself has done something to you. And so attached to the story are certain emotions. Resentments, the story is enormously energized by resentments and anger, sadness, what they did to me, what they did to me.

Kinds of things. Can you look through the story and die to the story? Not lose your memory, but die to the story as a self-reference, as giving you your sense of self.

So where does your sense of self come from, then, if you let go of that? If you die to that, and see that's not who you are, and you die to the unconsciousness of manufacturing further stories. Even complaining, let's go back to the example of the cold soup.

Complaining about the cold soup is another story. The moment you complain about it, I'm not saying heat it up, please. That's not complaining.

But the inner complaining, or the outer verbal complaining, which implies making something or someone wrong, that's the story. So drama, unconscious people are waiting just for the next thing out of which they can manufacture drama. The egoic identity in conjunction with the pain body is just looking out for the next thing out of which to manufacture their next dramatic episode.

Now the kind of dramas that people are drawn into vary a little. Some people have the victim drama, somebody's always doing it to me. Other people have other kinds of drama.

They get very angry with situations and people. Others, they get very sad. Poor me.

Well, that's the victim. I can't remember what else. There's quite a few.

And then you see how they use the tiniest events to add a little bit to incorporate into their dramatic story. So if you can see that in others, that's already great. If you can see it in yourself, it's even greater when it happens.

See it. And so you see what that is. Some people have a greater amount of, a denser ego and a denser pain body than others.

But the basic principle is there in everyone to some extent, greater or lesser. But it ceases to operate the more you step into presence. Then there's still only remnants of that that occasionally come in.

And then your life becomes simplified. So simple. Simplify, simplify, said one famous writer.

Thoreau, I think it was. Simplify, simplify. Now people talk about simplifying their lives and think it's to do with not indulging in excessive consumption and so on, which of course is good too.

But that happens naturally. The true simplification happens on the inner level. Let go of the stories.

Pay more attention to this moment than anything else. This is the day that we spend in

silence. The day that we spend listening.

Always just this moment. It sounds like a big thing if we say we'll spend the whole day listening, watching, being alert, attentive, alert to your surroundings and alert on the inner level. The more alert you are to sense perceptions, the more alertness you will also have within.

Stay for a little while with the empty chair.

[Speaker 2] (1:37:39 - 1:37:39)

Thank you.